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A TOUR TO CONNAUGHT.

LETTER II.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE DUBLIN PENNY JOURNAL.

SIR—So then, you do think my excursion to Connaught worth the fractional part of a penny, and consider it safe to enter it on your bill of fare in preference to the prudential course adopted by your cotemporaries, of selecting from works already printed and approved of by the public. Thanks for your patriotism—and so I shall proceed.

Where was I? Just at the nine mile stone, where the western road skirts the ample demesne of the Duke of Leinster. The deep sinking of the Royal Canal bordering the left—the high wall and thick plantation of the park the right of the road—a cloudy pillar of dust coming adown the westward, powdering our whiskers and pestering our eyes, as we rolled along this defile. Here an ugly sort of a curse was elicited from the lips of the English bagman against the jealousy of all aristocratic engrossers, who needs must plant themselves in, and with their trees and walls limit the eyescope and breathing room of freemen. “Oh, sir, sir,” says a quiet looking man who sat between me and the Manchester rider, “the duke is doing a world of good; and is not at all to be spoken ill of. If you knew of all the poor people he employs. There are now, I wish you could but see them, hundreds of men at work in this very demesne, excavating ground to make a great sheet of water, and flood the whole river valley of the Rye; and acres upon acres of fine meadows are to be turned into a long lake; I am sure I do not see what this is all for but to give work to the poor.” “Yes, my good friend,” said I, “you are right. The Fitzgerald family have always deserved the good opinion of their unprejudiced countrymen. Look at this great estate around you; it was brought into its present state of improvement by the present nobleman’s grandfather, the first Duke of Leinster. If this English gentleman had stood, as I have done, on the tower of Carton, and looked east and west, he would have observed one of the best managed estates in Ireland. Comfortable slated farm houses, two stories high, with all their accompanying homesteads; the fences hedge rowed; the lands well drained and divided, and in the centre of the property a town laid out in the English style, and all this done by one man. Would that all the great proprietors of Ireland had followed the first Duke of Leinster’s example, whose desire was to have around him not an idle, sporting, presuming, carousing set of squires—but a comfortable, industrious, humble, but at the same time self-respecting yeomanry—a class of men so much wanting, and, alas, still so scarce in Ireland. The first duke was certainly worthy of all his honours; while living in the splendour becoming one who was lord of 72,000 acres in *this* county we are now passing through, he had the sterling good sense to know how to improve his great possessions in the way best suited to serve his country—he was no rack-renter—he practically applied the old English adage—“LIVE, AND LET LIVE.” “Pray, sir, what sort of a house is Carton?” “It is what all houses are where improvements and additions are resorted to, to make up for original deficiency. It was not originally intended as the residence of the lords of Kildare; it was erected I believe, by a General Oglethorpe. The present duke has done much—changed its front, built large additions, and made it as perfect, as good arrangement can—(observe his Grace’s head when you next see him; he has the organ of order at least well developed on his close cropped cranium,) still after all Carton is but a poor house for such a demesne and such a property: but there are a great number of pictures, and a good collection of books. There is a St. Catherine there, by Domenichino, which to my mind is the first picture in Ireland—but give me, after all, portraits; they furnish the observer with such long trains of historical recollections. Here is a noble portrait of Gerald, the ninth earl. I looked on him, but not angrily, because he slew my ancestor, Shane O’Tool, in the glen of Imale, and sent his head as a pretty pickled present to the mayor of Dublin; no, I forgave this wrong, because that he so bravely quelled and brow beat that haughty prelate, Wolsey. There, also, is that extraordi-

nary portrait of the Fairy Earl—the Pilgrim Geraldine. There, also, before the hall-door of the eastern front stands, methinks in rather an incongruous place, amidst plots of odorous plants and parterres of dahlias and roses, the ancient cut stone council table of the earls of Kildare, when they dwelt in their stronghold of Maynooth. It lay buried there ever since the castle was sacked by the lord deputy in Henry the Eighth’s time, but has lately been dug out. If I were the Duke of Leinster I would build a great gothic hall, and place it in the centre: I would hang the tapestried walls with the armour, and the fretted roof with the pennons, and would emblazon the deeds of the bold Geraldines who sat beneath that table, and would surround it thus in things in keeping with its ancient character, and not leave it as it now stands, a support for flower pots, and a platform on which my lady duchess dries her mignonette, sweet pea, and tulip roots.” We entered Maynooth after passing Carton demesne—it looks neat, like all Irish towns, without a stir of business; unlike most, as not deformed with mud cabins. It was almost entirely rebuilt by the aforesaid first duke of Leinster, who desired to make it somewhat like an English market town; but, alas, it is easier to build houses than to change the spirits and habits of a people. It is now celebrated as containing the great Roman Catholic College, which stands fronting you as you drive down the street. The centre building was erected by a butler of the late Duke of Leinster, who out of his savings erected it as a private mansion; he little thought of all the latin, and logic, and dogmatic theology it would subsequently contain. This college is daily enlarging itself; and so it should, if meant to supply the immense and rapidly increasing Roman Catholic population of Ireland with clergymen. To me it seems to extend itself without any view towards uniformity, and to be straggling in its hugeness, more like a large barrack than a college. It does not want for discipline, as I am told, but it wants venerability—it may have academic seclusion, and no doubt it has, but it is deficient in the air, the unction, in that scholastic, grey sobriety that characterize Oxford and Cambridge in England, or Padua or Salamanca on the continent. I prefer casting my eye and feasting it on yonder old castle. I remember well, in my younger days, driving under yonder archwayed tower that led into the ballium of this Geraldine fortress—the high road ran under it then. What a grim, gloomy, prison-like pile is this keep: was it ever inhabited since the traitor fosterer of Silken Thomas betrayed it to the lord deputy? Observe, as you pass by—confound those coaches, they get on so fast one cannot settle eye or mind on any thing—but do if you can, observe that many of the quoins and of the very few ornaments belonging to this castle are of calcareous tufa, a recent fresh water formation, and by no means common or abundant in Ireland. It appears to be a soft, perishable material, and yet there it has stood for centuries, as quoins in the old fortress; nay more, I have seen it in the island of Holme Patrick, near Skerries, form windows, door-cases, and the cryptic roof of a chapel, said to be built by Saint Patrick, but which certainly is one thousand years old. Maynooth does not boast alone of *modern* collegiate notoriety; Gerald, the 8th earl of Kildare, the greatest warrior of his race since the days of his ancestor Maurice—he who was made by King Henry ruler over all Ireland, because all Ireland could not rule him—he who excused himself for burning the cathedral of Cashel, by assuaging his majesty that he would not have done it were he not sure that the archbishop was therein—he who kept all Ireland under dread of his iron arm—perhaps to make up his accounts at last, and produce a fair balance sheet in the next world, founded a college here, with provost, vice-provost, and fellows, and endowed it with lands around the tower of Tahadoo—by-the-bye, Tahadoo tower is one of the finest in Ireland, and the beauty of its situation is great. Beyond a doubt I could say a great deal about round towers, and would do so now, having my own opinion as well as others on this disputed subject, only that I understand there is a premium now offered for the best essay on the subject, by the Royal Irish Academy, and, sir, I do not desire to forestall the market, perhaps I may be one of the can-

didates, seeing as how I have an interest in the matter, my ancestor, King O'Tool, as all the guides at Glendalough assert, having given the ground for building the oldest of them to Saint Kevin.

Leaving Maynooth, the coach passed on by the ruined church of Lara Brien." "There," says the honest young man who had not long ago defended the Duke of Leinster against the insinuations of the bagman, "there," says he, "beside hundreds of the Fitzgeralds, lies the great Brian Borohma." "How do you know that, my friend?" "Why, because all the neighbours say so; and sure it's called Lara Brien after him—and were not his spurs dug up, which his Grace the Duke now has, and you may see them any time you like in his study—and a fine brave pair of bleeders they are, with rowels as large as *two-and-six-pennies*—and sure it stands to reason that if his spurs were buried here, his body must have been along with them; for King Brian, do you see, was like all Christian knights, buried with sword and shield, boots and spurs, and all his armour—so at any rate says our chapel clerk and schoolmaster, that is a great antiquary entirely—he can't be astray, seeing as how he has Dr. Keating's History of Ireland at his fingers' ends." "Friend," says I, "you are quite wrong. The hero of Clontarf was not interred here; neither was he at Kilmahnam, as the learned Franciscan, Peter Walsh reports—but he was conveyed to Armagh, and buried there beside the great altar. The holy men of the Abbey of Swords raised him from the fatal spot where the base Bruoder, the Dane, slaughtered him, and along with his gallant son Murrrough, who fell in the arms of victory, and brought him to Duleek. There the monks of that monastery took charge of him, and furthered him to Louth Abbey, from whence with solemn chaunt and requiem he was conveyed to Armagh. So, friend, I find your chapel of Lara Brien must be content with possessing the relics of humbler men." We now drew near Killocock—it is undoubtedly a very poor and ugly place, in the midst of a very fertile soil—strange that this should so often occur in Ireland, when the richer the country is the poorer is the town. "Is this a great place for cock-fighting," says the English rider, "that it is called Killocock? Ha, ha, ha, I to be sure am not the first who have had a fair hit at the number of places in *Hireland* that by their names denote the pugnacious character of your people—Kil this and Knock that, and Slew here and Drum there—at all events preserve me from this here place, for I am sure it would well nigh break the heart of a better cock than I am, to sojourn here one week." Here the farmer broke into a horse laugh, and swore that it would be no hard matter to find a better cock than him—seeing he was but a cockney. "Gentlemen," says I, "as you are in a merry mood, perhaps I may add to your humour if I tell you that this town we just passed is called after a worthy dame who was abbess of a nunnery here, and her name was Saint Cocca—aunt, as some say of Saint Patrick—the nurse, as others have it, (dry I suppose,) of Saint Keiran." "Well, now," cries the bagman, "if ever there was a practical bull, this here is one, to have a woman and an abbess called Mrs. Cock." The wit of coach travellers is generally coarse and this is but a specimen, which I may not further enlarge on. The hill Cappagh was now near at hand—what a rich tract of feeding land. The road, in my younger days, wended bravely over its summit—and though not three hundred feet above the level of the sea, it perhaps is the highest point between the bays of Dublin and Galway. How unlike most other islands is Erin—its mountainous districts all around the shores—its centre only just so elevated as to allow a drainage towards the Shannon, which also, unlike every other island river, runs parallel with the greatest length of the isle. Cappagh hill forms the high land that divides the streams falling into the Boyne and Liffey—from hence is a noble view of almost the whole of the ancient kingdom of Meath. Perhaps not in Europe—except its mediolanian namesake the Milanese—is there so much good land mixed with so little bad, as within its circuit. No wonder that the Kings of Meath were so often monarchs of Ireland. No wonder that the hills of Tara, of Usneach, of Skreen, were so famous—and here, also, was the great fair of Tailteen, where all the Irish lads and lasses met to get

married, and where, as now at Ballinasloe, there is a splendid show of fine cattle—so in those primitive days along the sides of the hill of Tailteen were ranged pretat girls and brave boys—and then after the young people had for a sufficient time cast sheep's eyes at one another, and after the parents had made proper bargains and arranged family settlements, games, and sports, and feats of activity began, which were similar, and not perhaps inferior to the Isthmean, or Olympic games of Greece—human nature is the same in all times and places—the young must marry and be given in marriage—and what great difference is there between a mother bringing her daughter to range her with others along the side of a ball-room, and so make a show of her, and the Milesian mother of olden time leading her blushing girl to Tailteen, to sit modestly on the green clover, and with downcast diamonds every now and then peeping out from beneath her long eyelashes, to spy whether the *boys* from the opposite side of the line were cocking their bonnets at her. I remember, not long ago, travelling through the county of Down, and witnessing a practice not unlike that of Tailteen. After the cattle, sheep, and pig business of the fair was over—along the sides of the road leading to the fair-green, and on the smooth, grass-covered ditches, all the neighbouring unmarried girls were seated, clothed in their gayest attire; and though nothing in the least indecent or riotous was practised, yet I was assured that here they were assembled to run the chance of getting lovers, and, of course, husbands. Pardon this digression, good reader—it was only resorted to in order to break the dull uniformity of the country from the time you leave Cappagh hill until you get to the Boyne—but, Mr. Folds, here I will pause, and beg of you to recollect, when you commence my next letter, that we halted at the Boyne.

TERENCE O'TOOLE.

THE GEOLOGY OF DUBLIN AND ITS SUBURBS.

The advantages of soil and climate by which this country is so pre-eminently distinguished, are the theme of every statistical writer, and, being pretty generally admitted, do not require any special enforcement. It is not, however, so generally known that Ireland is a country, not only suited to agricultural improvement, but one abounding in every object which can attract or reward the attention of the philosophic student of nature. It would indeed be difficult to point out a single district of our favoured land which does not present, not only curious objects of antiquarian research, but those rare and instructive natural productions, which excite an interest more vivid and enduring than the sublimest of the creations of art. A most fertile and diversified surface, and a variety of climate not only dependant upon the length to which it stretches along the meridian, but upon the altitude of its mountain chains, and the number and extent of its lakes and rivers, confer upon Ireland a Flora second to that of no other country in Europe for number and variety of species; while the pursuer of mineralogical or geological studies is equally ensured, within its limits, ample means of illustration and instruction. To the scientific tourist Ireland also presents another source of attraction almost peculiar to herself. While the harvest of science has been repeatedly gathered elsewhere, and the soil as it were exhausted by repeated cultivation, Ireland is still an unexplored wilderness, and requires but the hand of industry and skill in order to the disclosure of its fertility, and the rich rewarding of those who may have the judgment to select it as a theatre of philosophical enterprise. To sustain these positions in their fullest extent by a reference to facts, though an easy task, would carry us far beyond the limits within which this communication must of necessity be confined. We purpose, however, singling out one department of science—that of geology, and shewing that it may be studied with the greatest advantage in this city, inasmuch as the structure of the adjacent country suffices to illustrate some of its most imposing theories, and exemplify some of its most striking phenomena.

Dublin is situate at the embouchure of the river Liffey, by which it is divided into nearly equal portions, and is encircled on the side of the land by a chain of lofty and